

Applicants : Herman Jacobus Blok, Hendrik Sibolt Van Damme
Colin John Ingham and Maria Helena Hilhorst
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Remarks

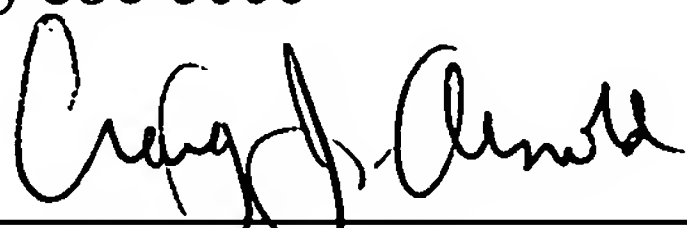
Claims 1-24 were pending. By this amendment, applicants have amended Claims 1, 2, 4-16, 18-21, 23, 24, 26-29, 38, 40, 41, 43, 45, 47, 48 and 50 and cancelled Claims 30-37 and 52-54 in order to comply with U.S. patent practice, to correct minor typographical and grammatical errors, and to eliminate multiple dependencies to reduce the filing fees. The amendments to the claims are being made without prejudice or disclaimer to applicants' right to pursue these claims later in prosecution. The amendments to the claims do not introduce new matter. Accordingly, entry of the foregoing claim amendments is respectfully requested.

No fee is deemed necessary in connection with the filing of this Preliminary Amendment. If any fee is required, authorization is hereby given to charge any such fee to Deposit Account No. 01-1785.

Respectfully submitted,

AMSTER, ROTHSTEIN & EBENSTEIN LLP
Attorneys for Applicants
90 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10016
(212) 336-8000

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By: 
Craig J. Arnold
Registration No. 34,287